

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRASIL 09995 052132Z

ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5028

INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 9995

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BR

SUBJECT: MDB REACTION TO GEISEL DECEMBER 1 SPEECH

REF: BRASILIA 9960

1. SPEAKING FOR A PARTY TORN BETWEEN PRAGMATIC "MODERATES" AND IDEOLOGICAL "RADICALS" OVER THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GEISEL-SPONSORED DIALOGUE, MDB PRESIDENT ULYSSES GUIMARAES ISSUED A STATMENT DECEMBER 3 THAT TOOK NEITHER SIDE OF ISSUE BUT RATHER LISTED A LONG SERIES OF ELECTORAL, LEGISLATIVE, JUDICIAL AND MEDIA ATTRIBUTES PERTAINING TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT WHICH ARE LACKING IN BRAZIL. CONCLUDING THIS PORTION OF STATEMENT, GUIMARAES ASKED: "ARE THE NATION'S RIGHT OF PARTICIPATION, ITS FREEDOM, ITS POWER OF (EXERTING) SOCIAL PRESSURE, GOING TO BE REINSTATED, OR ARE THEY NOT?"

2. GUIMARAES THEN CAME DOWN HARD ON A STATEMENT MADE LAST WEEK DURING A VISIT TO BRASILIA BY BRAZIL'S FOREMOST SPORTS HERE: PELE. HE WAS QUOTED AS SAYING -- IN THE CONGRESS, WHICH HAD GATHERED TO HONOR HIM -- THAT BRAZILIANS ARE NOT MATURE ENOUGH TO VOTE. PELE LATER TRIED TO EXPLAIN HIS STATEMENT AWAY BY CLAIMING HE WAS CRITICIZING THE BRAZILIAN PROPENSITY TO VOTE PERSONALITIES

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BRASIL 09995 052132Z

OR WHIMS RATHER THAN ISSUES. HOWEVER, OBVIOUSLY USING PELE AS A SURROGATE FOR GEISEL, GUIMARAES DEVOTED ONE-THIRD OF HIS LONG STATEMENT TO THESIS THAT TO VOTE WRONGLY IS BETTER THAN NOT TO HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE AT ALL (AS IN BRAZIL'S INDIRECT ELECTIONS FOR PRESIDENT, GOVERNORS AND SOME SENATORS). HE QUOTED US SUPREME COURT JUSTICE BLACK: "THAT RIGHT, THE RIGHT TO MAKE POLITICAL MISTAKES, IS WHAT KEEPS US STRONG AS A NATION," AND ENDED BY

PRAISING THE "WISDOM AND SOVEREIGNTY OF THE PEOPLE" THAT HAVE MADE THE UNITED STATES WHAT IT IS TODAY.

3. EARLIER, GUIMARAES HAD TOLD REPORTERS THAT THE MDB, "AS ANY DEMOCRATIC PARTY," IS OPEN TO DIALOGUE WITH THE GOVERNMENT. HE ALSO SAID GEISEL'S SPEECH CONTAINED SOME POSITIVE ELEMENTS, E.G., THE FACT THAT GEISEL IS THE FIRST PRESIDENT SINCE CASTELLO BRANCO (1964-67) TO SAY THAT THE "LAWS OF EXCEPTION" ARE NO LONGER ESSENTIAL. GUIMARAES THUS URGED THAT THE "LAW OF GREATEST EXCEPTION, THE CURRENT (1969) CONSTITUTION," (WHICH INCORPORATES THE INSTITUTIONAL ACTS) BE REPLACED AS WELL.

4. GUIMARAES', AND THE MDB'S, AGONIZING DILEMMA WAS MOST GRAPHICALLY ILLUSTRATED LATE LAST WEEK BY THE PARTY'S INABILITY TO AGREE ON WHETHER OR NOT TO REPLACE MODERATE FRANCO MONTORO AS PARTY LEADER IN THE SENATE AND, IF SO, BY WHOM. INABILITY TO BREAK A 10-10 SPLIT OF THE MDB'S TWENTY SENATORS BY THE END OF THE WEEK -- AND OF THIS CONGRESSIONAL SESSION -- FORCED THE ISSUE TO BE PUT OFF UNTIL CONGRESS RECONVENES IN MARCH. IN ITS SIMPLEST TERMS, THE ISSUE, AS WITH THE MDB LEADERSHIP IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES (SAO PAULO 3039). IS WHETHER THE PARTY'S CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATIONS ARE TO BE LED NEXT YEAR BY MODERATES FAVORING DIALOGUE OR "RADICALS" OPPOSED TO IT. THE MODERATES SUPPORT CONTINUED MONTORO LEADERSHIP IN THE SENATE AND ARE SEEKING TO REPLACE "RADICAL" CHAMBER LEADER FREITAS NOBRE BY TANCREDINO NEVES. THE "RADICALS" ARE BACKING PAULO BROSSARD FOR THE SENATE LEADERSHIP AND FREITAS NOBRE IN THE CHAMBER. CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BRASIL 09995 052132Z

5. THE SENATE BATTLE RESULTED IN THE OSTENSIBLE "RESIGNATION" FROM THE POSTS OF VICE LEADERS OF PRO-BROSSARD SENATORS GILVAN ROCHA AND ITAMAR FRANCO. THEY TOLD THE POLITICAL COUNSLOR LAST WEEK THAT THERE WAS HEAVY PRESSURE ON THEM, BOTH FROM WITHIN THE PARTY AND FROM WITHOUT (I.E., THE GOVERNMENT), TO SWITCH TO SOMEONE LESS CONTROVERSIAL AND LESS LIKELY TO BE "CONFRONTATIONAL" ON THE DIALOGUE ISSUE.

6. MEANWHILE, ARENA SENATE PRESIDENT PORTELLA TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE TIME IS NOT YET RIGHT FORMALLY TO ENGAGE THE MDB (VIA GUIMARAES) IN THE DIALOGUE. THE PRESS SPECULATED THAT PORTELLA DOES NOT WANT TO APPEAR TO BE COURTING THE MDB SO SOON AFTER GUIMARAES' ABSOLUTION BY THE SUPREME FEDERAL TRIBUNAL (PARA 3, BRASILIA 9900) AND THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH SO AS TO AVOID AROUSING THE WRATH OF "RADICAL FORCES" BOTH WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF THE MDB. JOHNSON

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